

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Influence of Lymph Node Dissection on Survival in Esophageal Cancer

Dear Sir,

It is important not to overinterpret the good survival outcomes reported by Kawahara et al. [1] for three- vs. two-field lymphadenectomy in esophageal cancer. They performed a retrospective review and found that patients who had less than four positive nodes had prolonged survival following three-field lymphadenectomy in comparison with two-field lymphadenectomy. These data must be viewed cautiously since the increased extent of lymphadenectomy may simply have increased the number of lymph nodes sampled and hence the number of positive lymph nodes found. Thus, similar patients would be staged differently simply because of the surgical procedure and extent of lymphadenectomy. The improved survival would therefore be due to improved staging rather than any true benefit of surgery. A randomized trial with careful preoperative staging would be the only

way to try to determine whether increased lymph node dissection has any therapeutic benefit.

Stephen G. Swisher, MD,* and Joe B. Putnam, Jr., MD
Department of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery
The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
Houston, Texas

REFERENCE

1. Kawahara K, Maekawa T, Okabayashi K, et al.: The number of lymph node metastases influences survival in esophageal cancer. *J Surg Oncol* 1998;67:160–163.

*Correspondence to: Stephen G. Swisher, MD, Department of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery, The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Box 109, Houston, TX 77030. Fax No.: (713) 794-4901. E-mail: sswisher@notes.mdacc.tmc.edu

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